



PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2000

CONTACT: Maureen Cragin

Ryan Vaart

(202) 225-2539

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ON FY 2001 BUDGET REQUEST

MILITARY SERVICE CHIEFS

Today, the committee continues its oversight of the fiscal year 2001 defense budget request. We have with us this morning the four military service chiefs:

- General Eric Shinseki, Chief of Staff of the Army
- Admiral Jay Johnson, Chief of Naval Operations
- General Michael Ryan, Chief of Staff of the Air Force
- General James Jones, Commandant of the Marine Corps

Yesterday, the committee heard testimony from Secretary of Defense Cohen and General Shelton on the fiscal year 2001 defense budget request. As I did yesterday, I note that the budget request, the last for this Administration, for the first time in a decade calls for a significant real growth increase in defense spending. I welcome this development and must once again commend Secretary Cohen, General Shelton and the four of you for prevailing on the Administration to join those of us who have argued for years that additional resources were needed to halt the decade-long erosion in U.S. military capability. But paraphrasing from Secretary Cohen's testimony yesterday, one year of real growth does not a military make.

However we got here, we find ourselves at the bottom of a steep mountain that we must climb steadily and aggressively if we are to avoid the defense budget "train wreck" that is widely recognized as being just around the corner.

In many respects, the collective task before us is educational. Mr. Skelton yesterday talked about the growing gap between military America and civilian America. I share the concern and believe it further challenges us to better articulate the defense debate in terms that are more real and practical to the American public.

Numerical assessments of defense budget "shortfalls" and "growth" over complicated spending baselines mean little outside of Washington, and I have always believed that the more appropriate defense debate should be over what level of national security risk our nation is willing to accept. Only five months ago, General Shinseki told the committee that "there is still a mismatch between the resources we have and the requirements we may face. At the high end on the spectrum of conflict, the strategy calls for fighting

(MORE)

nearly simultaneously in two major theater wars... However, as we have noted on several occasions, there is significant risk in the second major theater war. That risk is measured in the expenditure of national treasure – American lives and dollars.”

Gentlemen, over the course of the past five years, either you or your predecessors have appeared before this committee and itemized the range of unfunded quality of life, readiness and modernization requirements. Your assessments have served as an important measure of the inadequacy of defense budgets and have guided us on how best to address the most critical shortfalls with whatever additional resources Congress could muster.

In testimony before the Committee last October, the four of you estimated that the cumulative level of unfunded requirements facing the services was approximately \$9 billion, even after assuming the increased funding anticipated in the fiscal year 2001 budget.

Today, the committee will once again ask for your assessment of how this year’s budget addresses such shortfalls, what problems you continue to confront and which areas require the most urgent attention. I look forward to this discussion and to your important input. But I would also ask you to address any discussion of shortfalls in the context of military preparedness and risk so that the ensuing debate can be properly framed for the broader and more important audience that lies beyond this room.

###